

# Submission to the Parliamentary enquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians.

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The following submission addresses the five terms of reference of the enquiry. The downgrading of the position of both libraries and Teacher Librarians within the school system is highlighted. Several points are raised.

- The need for university places to ensure trained staff is available and appointed to Teacher Librarian positions.
- The need for a staffing formula for all schools that enables specialist teachers to be appointed **outside of establish classroom staffing**
- Teacher Librarians need not to be encumbered by RFF duties so that Co-operative planning and teaching models can be undertaken to ensure quality teaching practices in schools.

In the words of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd I *agree that the role Librarians and teachers play in helping kids find the right books and learn to love books is vital* K.Rudd 2010

# The role of different levels of Government and Local Communities & other institutions in partnering with & supporting school Libraries.

Having access to a well resourced school library and the services of a fully trained and qualified teacher librarian is the right of every student in an Australian school. The provision of the school library facility and the employment of a highly qualified teacher librarian in every school is the responsibility of the federal and state governments of Australia. (ASLA 2009)

## **Federal Govt**

- Develop connected national, state and local government policy frameworks, and an expectation that schools and public libraries cooperate in supporting students.

## **State Govt.**

- Adequate funding levels for staffing schools to enable Teacher Librarians to be employed as a specialist teacher, not encumbered with RFF duties.
- An NSW Primary Principals' Association position paper (NSWPPA 2002) notes that whereas previously relief from face-to-face teaching (RFF) was provided by RFF teachers from RFF allocations of two hours per teacher, now many schools use the teacher librarian to deliver part of the RFF program. The paper suggests that information literacy 'is too important to be taught in isolation from other class activities' and that the responsibilities of the teacher librarian are already demanding and complex enough without this added responsibility.
- Acknowledge the role of Teacher Librarians in the DET as one of a specialist teacher providing a strong role in literacy within schools
- A need to make departmental policies more inclusive and explicit in terms of the contribution the school library can make to the learning goals of a school.
- Provide PD for Principals focussing on supporting school libraries, the role of the library in the school and the development of excellent teacher librarians who improve student achievement to foster greater recognition of the important role that school librarians can play in student learning within schools.

- Provide adequate funding to Government schools to fund school libraries  
75% of Australian government school libraries have annual budgets of under \$20,000. With half of these under \$5,000, and 1 in 6 under \$1,000 pa for books, magazines and digital resources to support teaching and learning. (Combes, B.2008 Australian School Libraries Research Project)

## Local Communities

- Encourage and fund co-operation between school and public library services to enable a broader, more varied program to be implemented to raise the profile of reading and books.eg jointly funded author, illustrator visits and Book Week activities, this is undertaken in the Wollondilly Shire of NSW at present in a small scale due to funding constraints.



Illustrator David Legge at Thirlmere Public School Library. Children's Book Week, 2009

# Impact & potential of digital technologies to enhance and support roles of school Libraries and Librarians.

- *Perhaps the most significant factor affecting the role of school libraries and school librarians in relation to student achievement is the explosion of information, particularly in relation to digital resources, that has taken place in recent years. Given the vast volumes of information available, the rapidly obsolete nature of much of this information, and the questionable quality of much that is available on the Internet, the role of the school librarian has arguably become even more important than in the past. Information Power (American Association of School Librarians 1998),*
- Librarians have embraced new web 2 technologies and provide students and staff with specialist knowledge in regard to internet searching skills and enhancing the use of technology to develop excellent research skills in students.
- Use of technology provided by the DET (SCIS cataloguing service) has enabled Libraries and Librarians to create a catalogue of Library resources that is readily accessible to both students and staff via the internet.
- Librarians have the skills needed to search and present relevant digital resources to support & enrich the curriculum. These skills need to be shared with both students and staff through collaborative programming and teaching in school libraries.
- Today's students are faced with a world of ever changing technology, a trained school librarian can provide them with the information skills to sift through the "goggle" search paths to find relevant information.
- School Libraries can provide equal access to new technologies to all students.  
*The school library may well be the only place where students of particular socio-economic and cultural backgrounds have access to emerging technologies and resources. (Todd, R, p 33)*



Lunchtime in the Thirlmere Public School Library, celebrating Dr. Seuss's birthday viewing *Green Eggs and Ham* on the IWB.

# Impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and other activities.

- The BER programme has a strong emphasis on the building of school Libraries. It is important to ensure that this programme is supported with a policy of providing qualified, quality Teacher Librarians to staff them.
- The pilot staffing scheme has had major negative implications for Teacher Librarians as witnessed in the case of Loftus Public School and the decision of the principal to replace the retiring Teacher Librarian with a part time casual teacher (not Library trained) and admin staff.

# Factors influencing recruitment and development of School Librarians.

- Adequate provision of places needs to be provided in Teacher Librarian courses to ensure an adequate, trained worked force within school libraries.
- School Librarians , as specialist teachers to be provided in schools outside of the standard staffing formula, providing enough staffing in schools to provide all teachers RFF entitlements, so allowing Teacher/Librarians to provide quality teaching programs for both staff and students as recommended as best practice through co-operative teaching, planning and programming within the school.
- Teacher Librarians need to be recognised as essential specialist trained teachers within the school network.
- If Teacher Librarians are recognised in this way, the career will be more attractive and hence recruit better staff

# Future potential of Libraries and Librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy.

## LITERACY

- Trained Teacher Librarians can provide a school library with a relevant and interesting resource collection which will motivate all students to read and develop a targeted collection of print and digital resources to support teaching and learning.
- *Evidence shows that an effective school library program managed by a dually qualified, full time teacher librarian contributes significantly to student learning (Hay,L p29)*
- Libraries can be an active, vibrant, hub of the school and so raise the profile of reading within the school. As evident in the loan statistics at **Thirlmere Public School 2006-2009, WITH AN INCREASE OF 16.3% IN LOANS AT THE SCHOOL LIBRARY**. Also note the student population has dropped by 7.9 % over the same period.
- Teacher Librarians can co-ordinate a whole school approach to developing student information and literacy skills. At Thirlmere Public School the Premier's Reading Challenge was introduced into the school in 2007. 86 students completed the challenge, in 2009 this figure increased to 135 or 36.29%.
- Reading benchmarks for the students Yr1-6 in 2008 show **63% of students achieving** end of year targets. In **2009 this figure increased to 75%**.
- In Australia, Masters and Forster (1997) map literacy achievements among Year 3 and 5 students in Australian schools in reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. The study identifies several school and teacher variables that were significantly associated with literacy achievement, other things being equal, including extensive use of the school library by each teacher's class.
  - This factor was associated with a difference of as many as twenty-seven points in students' literacy achievements when compared with non-use of the library (Masters and Forster p. 207). *This Research has shown that where teachers made greater use of the school Library and computers student achievements in most strands were higher (Literacy learning contexts, p4)*
- Teacher Librarians help to deliver curricula, collaborate in teaching skills. Directly improve literacy through building and promoting exciting print collections and tailoring the print and digital resources to the needs of both the students and the staff.

## QUALITY TEACHING USING THE CPPT MODEL

- Research shows that educational outcomes are greatly enhanced through the Teacher Librarian and classroom teacher co operatively planning, programming and teaching CPPT. (NSWPPA.2002.)(ASLA,2009)

This mode of operation was being implemented before Schools' renewal in 1991. At that time relief from face to face teaching (RFF) was provided by RFF teachers from RFF allocations of two hours per teacher.

In June 1988 the state government announced staffing changes " Teachers will no longer have to be present when the class is being taken for Library by another Teacher ( Usually a specialist) This time will be used as part of the teachers RFF allocation.( NSW Department of Education,1988.p5)

This staffing change has greatly impacted on the provision of quality education provided by school librarians as they are no longer able to provide CCPT. At Thirlmere Public School CPPT time has decreased, due to staffing arrangements. See table below

Thirlmere Public School Library duties

	RFF duties	%	CCPT	%
2009	10hrs/week	55.55%	4hrs/week	22.22%
2010	11.5hrs/week	63.88%	2.5hrs/week	13.88%

As stated by Todd

*The increasing trend for Teacher Librarians to be used for face-to-face (RFF), is posing limits on this instructional collaborative role of the teacher librarian, working together with teachers rather than for teachers (Todd, R P.38)*

- Teacher Librarians are information specialists who can provide IT, Literacy, Information lit, copyright and plagiarism professional development to fellow teachers.
- There are so many diverse skills that a Teacher Librarian can bring to the practice of teaching and learning across all school levels. They are flexible facilitators of the learning process, able to make connections between subject areas, access all types of media and teach how to embed lifelong learning skills to all students. (Bundy, A )
- As stated by the Prime Minister's guest blogger, *Morris Gleitzman the system burdens school librarians with teaching duties, asks them to wear two hats at once to the detriment of both roles. A system that doesn't believe that school libraries are important enough to have full-time librarians. (Gleitzman,2010)*

## STUDENT CONFIDENCE

- Research shows that a school library contributes to building student confidence, independence and a sense of responsible learning (Kuhlthau,2004; Lonsdale2003:Dyer,2001:Murray,1999) as cited in School Libraries building capacity for student learning in 21C Hay,L and Foley,C 2009

## NAPLAN

- With the introduction of National Literacy and Numeracy Skills testing, skills of not just reading and comprehension are needed but inference, analysis, synthesis and evaluation skills are required. All an essential part of the information skills taught in school libraries by trained school Librarians through research skills training.

## CURRICULUM

- Teacher Librarians are able to provide relevant resources to support the whole school curriculum and the educational outcomes as they are familiar with the whole school curriculum and trained to teach critical thinking and knowledge building.

*As stated by Laycock. With their understanding of the reading needs and interests of students across the school, their knowledge of the range and diversity of literary texts, and their familiarity with the curriculum, teacher librarians are in a strong position to collaborate with teachers and take a leadership role in the development and implementation of curriculums that facilitate relevant and meaningful learning experiences for students. Laycock (2007, p17)*



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